

Mr. Langer

THE CARE
OF THE
BLIND
IN
ISRAEL

Israel

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE
ISRAEL

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THE CARE OF THE BLIND IN ISRAEL

In 1958, a Service for the Blind was set up as a separate administrative unit of the Ministry of Social Welfare, its objects being, in accordance with modern developments in social work, the rehabilitation of the blind and their integration into the life of the Community.

1. *Composition of the blind population*

Figures based on the survey made by the Ministry's Research Division in 1956, showed that 87% of 2,200 blind persons covered by the survey, immigrated since the establishment of the State, in 1948. It should be noted, however, that the survey was concerned only with about 40% of the Blind living in this country, so that we arrive at a figure of appr. $2\frac{1}{2}$ blind per 1,000 residents.

The special conditions of this country as a country of immigration from all over the world make for the fact that in contrast to the picture in other countries, 60% of the blind are of working age and 30% are old people. (In Anglo-Saxon countries, for instance, about 15—20% of the blind are of working age and about 60% above working age). This fact poses special and difficult tasks, as $\frac{2}{3}$ of our blind of working age are married and have children, but have no trade, profession or even practical working experience. The survey shows that about 1500 children under 14 have one or two blind parents. Another factor of considerable weight is the cultural and educational level of the blind, most of whom came from under-developed countries, i.e.:

58,9% were born in Asia, 25,7 in Africa and 15,4 in Europe.

In many of these countries, in accordance with a tradition going back for generations, the blind were neither cared for nor given work.

The data in respect of family status are typical of the conditions prevailing in the countries of origin:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Single	34.4%	21.3%
Married	59.6%	60.2%
Divorced	0.4%	1.2%
Widowed	3.3%	15.7%
Unknown	2.3%	1.6%

The comparatively high percentage of married women and widows may be explained by the fact, that these were mostly marriages of young blind girls to elderly men.

Productivity of the blind in our country depends to a large degree on intensive preparatory work, owing to the diversity in countries of origin, cultural levels and physical and mental abilities.

Since the Service for the Blind was set up, considerable progress has been made both in training blind persons for work and in finding employment for them. During the financial year 1961-2, 160 blind persons were trained in various trades and professions, as clerical and secretarial work, book-binding, dressmaking, carpet-weaving, telephone operating, weaving, spinning and I.B.M. machine operating. 4 blind students are at present studying at the Hebrew University. Furthermore, 18 blind persons were assisted and trained for shopkeeping and dairy farming. For 64, employment was found in open industries. In this country until recently blind persons, if they were working at all, were engaged in the traditional trades only; these figures show that considerable progress has been made.

2. *Some basic definitions*

Without going into the controversial subject of the definition of blindness, we have accepted, for practical purposes the definition of UNESCO, according to which blindness is:

1. Total absence of sight;
2. Seeing capacity not exceeding 3/60 or 20/200 on the seeing eye, with or without glasses;
3. Limitation of the field of vision so that the seeing angle does not exceed 20 degrees.

However, when judging the working potential of an individual blind person and his adaptability for a certain job, we have to take into

consideration not only his degree of blindness, according to a certain definition, but also a number of other factors, such as:

- Special qualification or skills;
- Temperament and character;
- Intelligence quotient and social standing;
- Emotional and social adjustment;
- Length of time of blindness;
- Acceptance of blindness.

Knowledge of these factors is of importance at all stages, such as during education, during vocational training, at placement and finally during the working period.

The aggregate of these details including the degree of blindness or remaining seeing capacity, is taken as a basis for the preparation of a rehabilitation programme.

3. *The Education of the Blind Child*



The main object of the education of a blind child should be to prepare him for an independent and productive life in the world of the seeing. In 1902, the first educational institution for the blind "Beth Chinuch Ivrim"¹, was established in Jerusalem and since then it has given elementary and pre-vocational education and training to blind children and young people. The Home has an elementary school, where all subjects are taught in Hebrew Braille. There is also a kindergarten for children aged 4—6 years, whose families, living in outlying new immigrants' settlements, cannot give them the care they need.

¹ More details on this School's activities will be given under Chapter 5 ("Institutes and Agencies for the Help of the Blind").

The curriculum of the School includes all subjects taught in normal elementary schools as supervised by the Ministry of Education as well as special courses designed to develop the senses, dexterity, concentration and memory of the blind child, and to instil working habits. In addition to writing in Braille pupils are taught typing both on ordinary and on special Braille machines. Music is one of the main subjects and many pupils had a full musical training in the school and are now proficient performers.

There are also workshops for basket-making, ceramics and various other handicrafts. Both boys and girls learn knitting and needlework. For girls, there is a special kitchen for cookery lessons.

During recent years, there has been a strong tendency towards integrating blind children into normal schools, so that they may continue to live with their families. This is difficult because blind children live all over the country and not all schools are suitable for them. In Tel Aviv, a successful attempt has been made with a group of blind children in one of the ordinary schools, where a teacher was specially trained abroad for this task. In some Arab villages, too, blind children are taught in the nearest regional school.

On the other hand, the majority of blind children will still have to use the Jerusalem School, for various reasons. — The Ministry of Welfare selects these children. Care is constantly taken to maintain the link between the child in the Home and his family. When plans have to be made for this future, the Ministry's Service for the Blind is consulted.

The pupil leaves the school with a full elementary school education as well as having acquired working habits, the use of a musical instrument and some pre-vocational training.

The only training institute for non-Jewish blind is the Saint Vincent Roman-Catholic Hostel in Jerusalem, where Braille and music are taught and general instruction given, all in French. Some pupils also learn weaving and other handicrafts.

4. *Vocational training of the Blind*

One of the aims of the Service for the Blind is to help the blind to become integrated into the ordinary working life of the community and to prevent them as far as possible from becoming an isolated group. This tendency to isolate the blind as a group was formerly prevalent, and still lingers on in some circles.

The survey carried out by the Ministry of Social Welfare shows

that 26.2% of the Jewish and 30% of the non-Jewish blind population were full or partly employed, but for the most part in "traditional" occupations with insufficient earning power.

For the purpose of planning appropriate professional training, the blind have been divided into 6 groups:

(1) Educated persons suitable for office positions, as translators and secretaries. A number of these were given a 1½ years' course in clerical work, including typewriting and telephone operating, which was arranged jointly with the Ministry of Labour and the Institute of the Blind. Hebrew and English were also taught.

This group includes a small number who prepare themselves for higher studies at the University.



(2) Blind persons of normal intelligence who have completed their elementary education. For these, a special industrial training workshop has been opened at the Institute for the Blind, where both theoretical and practical training are given in many trades. Trainees are also sent for a short period to industrial plants.

(3) Blind persons of normal intelligence, but without formal education. As a first step, those are taught Braille reading and writing, mostly by voluntary teachers. Migdal-Or, a special Institute for the Rehabilitation of the Blind in Haifa ¹ contributes much to the elementary education of this group, which includes reading and writing, orientation

¹ Details see later under Chapter 5 (Institutes and agencies for the help of the blind).

in the neighbourhood, self-reliance and the acquisition of working habits in various occupations, as well as pre-vocational training.

(4) Blind women who have hitherto not received special care. — The first task is to prepare them for every-day life and to teach them a trade or handicraft. A number of projects is being carried out for this group by the Ministry in cooperation with the Women's League for Israel (more details in Chapter 5):



- a. A course for weaving of various articles which have found a ready market;
- b. A course in housekeeping, where girls are trained to work in hospitals, rest-homes etc.;
- c. A course in sewing and dressmaking, to train for ordinary work in textile and dressmaking enterprises.

(5) Non-Jewish blind persons. — For these, 2 centres have been established: one for training in carpet-weaving in Nazareth and one in Shfar Am. In some of the more isolated Arab villages home teachers teach weaving, knitting and basket-making.

(6) Mentally retarded blind are taught simple basket and carpet-weaving with the object of enabling them to work at home.

Each candidate for vocational training is first sent by the local social worker for an intelligence test, medical examination and vocational guidance test, according to the results of which it is decided what special training he is to receive, when it will begin and how long it will last, what environment and accommodation are suitable for him

and what type of orientation he is to be taught, and how he will proceed to and from work.

5. *Institutes and Agencies for the Help of the Blind*

A number of institutes and agencies have given valuable help to the Service for the Blind in its endeavours to rehabilitate and train a considerable number of blind people in new occupations:

a. *The Institute of the Blind in Jerusalem*, the veteran in this field, which has already been mentioned. Until some years ago it was the only Jewish institute in the World and gave its services to the established blind population of this country as well as to newcomers, especially to those from under-developed conditions in this region where no care of the blind existed. Its main objectives are to educate Jewish blind children in spirit of Jewish tradition and for work, so that they should not become a liability to the public.

In addition to what has already been said in Chapter 3 and 4 on the important role of this Institute in educating and training its blind pupils, and the curriculum of studies, it should be emphasized that care is taken to maintain contact between the School and the child on one side, and his family on the other. Also, at an appropriate stage of the pupils education, the School and the Service for the Blind plan his future. Everything is being done in order that the pupil, when leaving the school will be equipped with full elementary education, many working habits and pre-vocational training.

Recently the School has established an industrial class where various technical skills are acquired during the period of one year, at the end of which the trainees will go into employment in industry.

b. *Migdal-Or, American Israeli Lighthouse Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, Haifa, Kiriat Haim.*

This Center set up by the American-Israeli Lighthouse and supplied with the most modern equipment, converts men and women, helpless and lost due to their blindness, into able and capable people who can live and work independently without the help of others, who can walk again by themselves, can work and earn their bread in honour, get married and create families of their own and take care of those families, and so become equal and useful members of the seeing society.



The Intake and its Problems

To understand and appreciate the outcome of the rehabilitation process, one should at first see the trainee being brought into the Center for the first time, in his helplessness, and then observe the same trainee after four to six weeks, and again after six months or so, when he leaves the Center on his own by means of the cane, ready for life and work as an equal member of the seeing world. This change is achieved in the following way: The first thing such a trainee upon his intake needs badly, is daily casework, because of his social psychological problems. The mere fact of having taken him away from his home and environment he was used to into a new world, and plans made for him, causes him to regard the whole institution with scepticism and lack of cooperation, until he learns that he is in his right place and the plans made for him are in his best interest. This refers to a man blind from birth or early childhood, while those blinded



only recently come mostly to the Center when they are in a state of despondency, and they also need constant casework until acceptance of their disability. As soon as they have accepted their new situation, the Center's program is being carried out as fast as they can absorb it.

Probation Period

During the probationary period of six to eight weeks, the trainee gets his basic training in the language, Braille, regular typewriting and Braille typing, Cane Travel, Personal and Home Management, demands of everyday life, as well as Arithmetics, Citizenship, Geography, History and Handicrafts, in which most of the trainees are getting acquainted for the first time with working tools and materials and the handling of same. During this probationary period they are to reach a required norm of dexterity and performance. Hereafter, the Staff discusses the trainee, his achievements and his interests, his capabilities to be absorbed in open industry, or the Home Industry branch which is most suitable for him.

Workshop preparing for Open Industry

For the trainee capable to be absorbed in open industry, a well equipped workshop is at this disposal, where he is to undergo a program consisting of five stages: 1) Further development of his sense of touch and manual dexterity until he reaches the ability of performing the norm equal to a seeing man. 2) Metal Workshop, where he learns the handling of mechanical tools and power-driven machines. 3) Carpentry Workshop, where he learns the handling of all carpentry tools. 4) Industrial Sewing. 5) Work under real factory conditions. To be able to teach these skills, sub-contract jobs are obtained from various firms and factories for all the departments in the workshop. Upon completion of his studies at the workshop, and his social and recreational program, the blind is now ready for life and work.

Home Industries preparing for self-sufficiency

For those incapable of being absorbed in open industry because of various reasons, like in cases where the trainee under no circumstances reaches the required dexterity, or has other disabilities in addition to blindness (like chronic asthma or malaria and other diseases) and is subject to frequent attacks, some Home Industries are developed at the Center, to enable them to earn their bread in accordance with their physical abilities. The Home Industries taught presently are: Weaving, Knitting, Ceramics, Lampshades, Woodwork, Metalwork,

Basketry, Doormats, and gardening for those who live in villages or settlements, enabling them to earn their living by growing vegetables etc.

Home-Making

Every trainee, man or woman, learns at the Center the skills of Home-Making, including: housekeeping, cooking and baking, mending, washing and ironing.

Recreation

The Center's recreational program consists of games, chorus singing, dancing, theatricals, music, participation in entertainment programs by and within the seeing community, and activities of volunteers from the seeing world at the Center and outside the Center, enabling the trainees to keep contact with the outside world.

Special Courses

The Migdal-Or Center is also prepared to organize and maintain any special course required. At present the following Special Courses are in operation at the Center: 1) Secondary School Education; 2) Telephone operators; 3) Textile Spinning; 4) Home-Making.

c. *Women's League for Israel of New York in Joint Projects with the Ministry of Social Welfare — (Service for the Blind).*



The Ministry of Social Welfare and the Women's League for Israel began their efforts in the rehabilitation of blind girls through vocational training in 1954. Courses in hand-weaving were then established at the

Nathanyah Home of the Women's League for Israel. Eighteen girls received training in these courses and were also trained in personal services such as : cooking, ironing, laundering etc.

The weaving courses developed into a sheltered workshop, which is now housed in a special building built for that purpose and which adjoins the premises of the Home. A grant of IL. 50,000— was awarded in 1958 to the Women's League to be used for equipment for this workshop and for the improvement of the blind girls' living quarters in the Home. This workshop known as "Orah" has received the "Kaplan Award" for quality of workmanship and progress in efficiency. It has also received a citation from the International Fairs and Exhibitions for exhibits of their products. The products of this workshop, which are sold in the best shops in Israel, are also being exported to various parts of Europe and the United States. Recently, the turnover of this shop has reached IL. 250,000.— p.a., and the annual profit amounted to IL. 10,000.—.

In 1959, another joint program between the Welfare Ministry and the Womes's League for Israel was carried out in the professional training of blind women in housekeeping and cooking, to prepare them for positions in public institutions and vacation resorts.

A weaving workshop for blind girls sponsored jointly by the Women's League for Israel and the Ministry also exists in the Jerusalem Home of the Women's League.

The Welfare Ministry and the Women's League for Israel entered into partnership in maintaining a book-binding workshop "Zohar", in which both seeing and blind people are employed.

d. *Malben.*

This is an agency established by the American Joint Distribution Committee to assist in the rehabilitation of the many physically and mentally handicapped persons among the new immigrants. Its activities also include help to the blind.

In 1951 Malben took over Kfar Uriel (village for the blind) which was established in 1950 by the Jewish Agency, when it was found necessary to give shelter to a large group of blind new immigrants from Yemen, North Africa, Iraq and other countries.

Today, the Kfar Uriel village has 63 families totalling about 350 souls. Heads of families are employed by Malben in 4 workshops for the blind in the village.

Because of special conditions such as the age of the blind, their medical condition and lack of work tradition, it was necessary to make a careful social and medical assessment of the workers. According to the results of the assessment, the workers were classified into 3 groups: sheltered, semi-sheltered, and a group employed on piece-work basis. The Kfar Uriel workshops produce mattresses, brushes, brooms, baskets, etc. A number of families who expressed the desire to leave Kfar Uriel were helped to settle in the community and earn their livelihood by working in home industry.



Malben has done pioneer work for the elderly blind new immigrants, by establishing a special old age home for them in Pardess Chana. Malben also contributes to the maintenance of blind children who receive training at the School for the Blind in Jerusalem.

e. *The Israel Foundation for Guide Dogs for the Blind, in Haifa*, has now functioned for twelve years. It was the first to introduce seeing eye dogs into the country (they were also unknown in other countries in the Middle East).

The aim of the Foundation is to give the sightless freedom of movement through the use of scientifically trained guide dogs.

The major disadvantage with which the sightless have to contend is their dependence on others, their lack of personal freedom and privacy. This physical dependence is not only a great obstacle from an economic and social point of view, but it also may cause mental dependence, which creates a feeling of inferiority. By giving the sightless freedom of movement through the use of a guide dog we free him from the feeling of dependence on other persons and enable him to be a self-reliant and independent person who can provide for himself and his family and become a productive member of the community.

The task of the Institute is, consequently, to train guide dogs and to give an intensive training to blind persons in the use of the dog and in orientation, to teach them the basic principles of animal psychology and training and furthermore Braille, map reading, etc.

At the present time one endeavours to open for the blind other professions than the traditional blind man's trades; the question of mobility is, therefore, for the rehabilitation of the blind more decisive than before. A dog is especially invaluable to blind person in this rapidly developing country where traffic conditions sometimes become chaotic, new roads are constantly under construction, etc.

The Israel Foundation for Guide Dogs for the Blind is a public non-profit organization. It was established by the Ministry of Defence after the War of Liberation in order to help the blinded veterans in their return to normal civilian living. It soon appeared that the need for seeing eye dogs was equally great for civilians, and therefore the sphere of activities was extended to civilians as well.

The budget is provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Defence, the League for the Blind, and by private donations.

During this year, the Foundation has succeeded in starting the erection of suitable buildings, instead of the former entirely inadequate army barracks in which it was been provisionally accommodated up to the present. The new training centre is to be built in Haifa on a plot the Foundation received from the Jewish National Fund. It will comprise a modest but adequate building to house the blind students during their period of instruction, and also modern kennels

for the guide dogs whilst being trained. Thus the Foundation will be in a position to train a greater number of blind and so to help them on their way to rehabilitation.

f. *The Central Library for the Blind* was established in Nathanya ten years ago, by the Society for the Blind, and upon the advice of the late Dr. Ludwig Cohen, of Amsterdam, a well known blind expert on the care of the blind, who was invited by the Government of Israel as an expert adviser. It is now registered as an association in its own right; it is housed separately, and has more than 5000 volumes at its disposal. All of the Hebrew books have been transcribed into Braille by a voluntary group, members of which live all over the country and have done excellent work. It includes prisoners who were trained for this work, which they do voluntarily. The library contains literature and study material for students of geography, history, economics and social sciences, in Hebrew, Arabic, English and German. It serves mainly two groups of blind persons:

(1) the educated, for whom it is the only source for books in all spheres of science, arts and literature.

(2) illiterate immigrants from eastern, under-developed countries. The Library has given special thought to methods enabling them to learn the elements of reading and writing. An advantage of Hebrew Braille is that it does not use abbreviations as other languages do, and is therefore less of a strain on the memory.

The Talking Book Library (recorded books), the foundations for the establishment of which were laid two years ago, thanks to the generosity of a blind donor from Switzerland. This is of special importance for the blind in this country, many of whom, because of age and under-developed sense of touch, are unable to learn Braille. Recordings are made by actors and radio-announcers and this part of the Central Library will, no doubt, play a considerable role in connecting the blind with the outside world and broadening their knowledge in literature, music and other fields of culture. Tape recorders are supplied to those who need them.

A special department of the Library supplies, without profit, special equipment as walking-sticks, braille paper, braille typewriters, watches etc. to blind persons.

The activities of home teachers for the blind are also affiliated to the Library. 30 teachers have been trained, some of them to work on a voluntary basis. Supervision and inservice-training are carried out by professional staff of the Service of the Blind.

g. *The Association for the Blind and Prevention of Blindness.*

This Association was founded in 1953 by a small group of prominent Israel citizens. It is now a nationwide movement, with central offices in Jerusalem and branches in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Nathanya, Hadera, Kfar Saba, Herzlia, Petach Tikva, Ramat Gan and Kiryath Gath.

The work of the society which is done by volunteers covers the following fields:

1. Transcription of books into Hebrew Braille.
2. Running Clubs for the blind.
3. Help to existing institutions which care for the blind.
4. Individual attention to the blind.
5. Encouragement of cultural and social activities among the blind.
6. Raising public interest for the problems of the blind.

Under the auspices of the association, numerous cultural and social activities are undertaken. The clubs perform important functions, both pre-vocational and cultural. In the morning sessions of the clubs, handicrafts are taught by qualified teachers, including weaving, knitting, basketwork and others. In the evening sessions, lessons in languages are given and entertainment is being provided by means of concerts, lectures, play reading, chess playing, folk dancing etc. Twice yearly, trips are organized through which the blind learn to know the country. The space appreciation of his country by travel, is even more important to the blind than to the seeing. Hebrew books transcribed by members into Braille, are sent to the Central Library in Nathanya to be supplied free of postage fees or cost to any blind person.

Members of the society engage also in finding employment for the blind, using their private connections and influence with factory owners and businessmen. The Society helps existing institutions like the Seeing

Eye Dog School, both financially and by encouragement. Considerable time is devoted to the individual blind, to help him to cope with day-to-day problems caused by sickness, and a loan fund is run by the society to help the blind in his domestic difficulties. Scholarships are given to deserving students and musical instruments are supplied to the gifted.

The association has reached a high level of achievement in virtue of the spirit of voluntary action which pervades its activities. It is considered by the Service of the Blind as a valuable partner in the field of care and rehabilitation.

h. *The National Council for the Blind* was established in 1958, to assist the Ministry. The Council has 30 members who represent governmental and voluntary bodies, industry, the medical profession and the blind themselves. It works both in plenary sessions and in committees. Its functions are:

- (1) Coordinating activities of all agencies for the blind;
- (2) Initiating research work;
- (3) Initiating enterprises and services for the blind;
- (4) Planning for vocational training;
- (6) Establishing methods for care of the blind;
- (6) All other activities for the benefit of the blind.

The Council is a member of the World Council for the Blind, to which it sends 2 representatives.

Two voluntary agencies from abroad "Hilfe fuer die Blinden" in Switzerland and "Aide aux Avengles Israéliens" in Colmar (France) have given and still give valuable assistance to public and voluntary agencies working in this field in Israel, mainly by providing appliances and materials needed for social and vocational rehabilitation. The Swiss organization, for instance, provided the first special switchboards for training blind telephone operators, whereas the French agency helped by providing typewriters, both ordinary and Braille, for the training course for clerical work. Also, Braille watches, special paper, games, gramophones etc. are placed at the disposal of the various agencies and individual blind persons by these two voluntary organizations. From Switzerland, also, came a contribution towards the building fund of the Foundation for Guide Dogs.

6. *Placement of the Blind in Work and Employment*

Special placement officers of the Service for the Blind select the suitable places of employment for individual blind persons, work with

employers, foremen and fellow-workers to explain to them the working capacities of the blind candidates and help them to overcome difficulties. The local labour exchanges, as newly organized by a law of 1959, care for handicapped persons, among others, but not for the blind. This does not mean discrimination; the legislator thought that the apparatus of the general labour exchanges would not be adaptable to the more complicated problems of placing blind people in employment and left this field of activity to the Service for the Blind which is able to prepare the blind worker step by step for each phase of training and ensure a suitable environment. In this field, we are still at the beginning and have to reckon with age-old opinions and prejudices concerning the potentialities of the blind, but a promising start has been made. In considering figures, it should be remembered that out of our 5,000 blind, 60% are of working age, but of these 3,000 only 2,500 are healthy enough to work. Those of them who are gainfully employed, work within the following categories:

- Sheltered workshops;
- Home industries;
- Independent occupations;
- Clerical work and telephone exchanges;
- Agricultural work and packing of citrus-fruit;
- Open industry.

From the available data as to the kinds of work done by the blind while they were still seeing, we can judge how important sheltered workshops are in this country. The following details are taken from the above mentioned survey. (It is probable that most of those who became blind before they were 17 years old, did not work at all).

- 1.9% worked in agriculture or with livestock;
- 3.3% worked in unskilled occupations;
- 10.6% were artisans (3.5% tailors and seamstresses, 1.4% shoemakers);
- 1.3% were skilled labourers;
- 4.2% were teachers or clerical workers;
- 2.7% were pedlars;
- 9.5% were shopkeepers or merchants;
- 0.4% were studying;
- 1.6% were employed in various services;
- 13.6% were housewives;
- 0.2% were beggars;
- 50.7% were unemployed before they became blind.

The sheltered workshops of Malben were already mentioned above Chapter 5 (d). Malben has a special administrative unit to deal with marketing of the products of blind people's workshops. Two sheltered workshops are maintained by the Ministry of Social Welfare for blind workers with additional handicaps. They make baskets and similar objects and earn minimum wages which are partly covered by a grant from the Ministry. The Ministry also bears the cost of social insurance etc., cares for the supply of raw materials and markets the products.

In this connection, attention is also drawn to what has been said above in chapter 5(c) about the Orah weaving workshop for girls, a joint enterprise of the Ministry and the Women's League for Israel in New York. The girls work on a piece work basis and have reached an output exceeding that of seeing workers. They earn up to IL. 300 per month.

A number of blind persons work at home, making brushes etc. The Service of the Blind supplies raw materials which it imports free of duty and purchase tax. It has also made itself responsible for marketing the produced articles, but because of over-production of the traditional products of the blind, this meets with considerable difficulties. The income of these blind workers is lower than that of their seeing colleagues, and in most cases they are supported by seeing members of their families.

Another group of blind persons used to be employed in weaving of mats, but this manufacture has now been liquidated because of marketing difficulties. The former workers are given proper assistance until they can be transferred to other suitable branches. Still another group of blind workers are employed in privately owned workshops. Here too, the Ministry helps in obtaining raw materials, and partly in marketing the finished products. Because of a lower output, these blind workers earn minimum wages only.

The situation of all blind persons engaged in these traditional occupations, has in general deteriorated lately, because of the unlimited competition of seeing entrepreneurs, mostly new immigrant, who have started working in these fields, and also because of the growing process of mechanization in making of mats etc. Most of these blind people have worked in these trades for decades and are today 50—55 years old, so that their transition to other occupations seems rather difficult.

Some blind persons who became blind in middle age, continue in their former independent professions as shopkeepers or owners of

small workshops. They are assisted by the Service for the Blind in various ways.

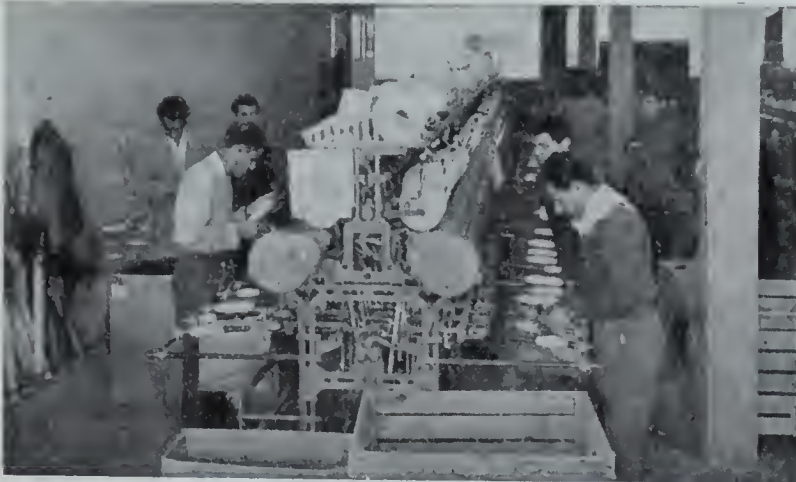
The Service has trained 45 blind telephone operators who have found employment in both governmental and private offices as well as in industrial enterprises, and have shown considerable efficiency. On the other hand, the placement of specially trained clerical staff has met with difficulties because of the still existing negative attitude of prospective employers.

Placing blind persons in agriculture is a field which still has to be explored and where prejudice has to be overcome.

30 persons have been trained and are working as teachers, doctors, masseurs and lawyers, and 15 as teachers of music. Approximately 100 blind persons engage every winter in packing of citrus fruit for export and have proved to be very efficient. Their wages are those of seeing workers. However, because of its seasonal limitation, this kind of work is not attractive.

Open Industry

Placement of a blind person in open industry is a modern development in this country, and as elsewhere, it is a way of ensuring his economic and social rehabilitation. An increasing number of blind workers have already been placed in various occupations in 42 industrial enterprises and have gained full acceptance and rights.



The Department of Health, Education and Welfare of the United States (Office for Vocational Rehabilitation) has approved for support

a research and experimental program of the Service for the Blind, concerning methods of training blind persons in core winding, cotton spinning, weft winding and cotton weaving. The Israeli Institute of Productivity is cooperating in this project. The training course will start soon at the Arie Shenkar Textile School, a joint foundation of the Manufacturers Association, Ort in Israel and the Ramat Gan Municipality. Trainees will be given theoretical and practical training. The results of the research and practical demonstration will be beneficial not only to this country, but may also prove useful to similar industries in Turkey, Cyprus, Greece and the African Continent; where textile industries are under development. The training center may be able to serve these countries, either by sending trained staff or by inviting trainees to join the courses.

Experiments made in some large textile mills in Israel have shown that in principle these operations are suited for the normal, physically fit blind person. A thorough analysis and evaluation of techniques may well result in introducing improved methods of operations and training in the field of cotton spinning and weaving. —

Recently, a film was made showing how our blind workers are trained for industrial employment, placed in jobs and helped by placement officers. This film is used to convince prospective employers of the capacities of blind workers.

In order to arrange for placement of the blind in open industries on a broader basis, it will be necessary to engage in a survey of suitable occupations.

The desirability of ensuring the employment of a certain percentage of blind workers in industry by legislative measures is still an open question here as elsewhere. Blind war victims are already protected by law. We would prefer to see the blind take their place in industry, not by pressure of law, but rather by virtue of intensive training and development of intellectual and physical strength, and by the creation of favourable public opinion of their working capacities.

